

Coinage of the Confederacy

The Cent and Half Dollar



by

Mark Borckardt

Copyright 1994 by
Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc.
Wolfeboro, New Hampshire
First Edition

The Confederate Cent



Robert Lovett, Jr. and the "Nickel" original

After South Carolina seceded from the Union, followed by other southern states, the Confederate States of America were formed, however, it is not our purpose to repeat the history of the Civil War. We are concerned with the Confederacy's interest in establishing a metallic currency. In 1861, the southern government contacted Philadelphia jewelers Bailey & Co. about having a one cent coin produced. They in turn commissioned Robert Lovett, Jr., a Philadelphia medalist and die-sinker, to produce the design, engrave dies, and strike the coins. For the obverse, Lovett chose the identical bust of Liberty which he had used a year earlier on a storecard advertising his own business. This simple fact, alone, is sufficient to positively identify Robert Lovett, Jr. as the person who created the Confederate cent.

Once completed, Lovett used these dies to strike 12 originals in the metal "Nickel" which we more commonly refer to, today, as copper-nickel. This composition is similar to the Indian cents of the Civil War era. We can only assume that the weight standard was also the same as the Indian cent. The story was related that Mrs. Lovett was quite concerned that the existence of these coins would demonstrate his assistance to the enemy, eventually leading to his arrest for treason. She convinced Robert to hide the dies and coins, telling nobody of their actual existence for many years after the war.

Apparently, no one could accuse Lovett of being a teetotaler. He carried one of these cents as a pocket piece and, one day in 1873, spent the little jewel in a West Philadelphia bar. The barkeeper, who recognized the cent as an oddity, sent word out about its existence. In an address to the ANA convention in 1908, Captain John W. Haseltine relayed the history of this issue:

I have been asked to say something about the so-called Confederate cent. A little circular issued by myself and Mr. Randall some years ago tells all the history of the striking of those pieces, but I do not think it mentioned how I obtained the dies. One day I was told by a gentleman that a bartender in West Philadelphia had a Confederate cent. I doubted it. Mr. J. Colvin Randall (now deceased) was told the same. He conferred with me in reference to it, and we decided that if either of us obtained it we would share in any profit that would accrue from it. I saw the bartender and purchased the coin from him. It was in nickel, and he said he

received it over the bar. I knew by the head on the obverse it was Mr. Lovett's work. I called on Mr. Lovett, and he denied ever having made the dies. Numerous times I called to induce him to give me some information about them, but he always stuck to his story that he did not make them until one day, when he was slightly 'in his cups,' he pulled out a drawer in one of his cabinets, and I beheld a line of little Confederate cents. Of course I tackled him at once, and he then owned up and told me that he had eleven of them, but formerly there were twelve, he having lost one. He said he received the order to make them for the Confederacy through a well-known jewelry firm in Philadelphia (I think he said Bailey & Co.), but that his wife became timid about his delivering them for fear the United States Government might arrest him for giving assistance to the enemy, so he buried them in his cellar until long after the war was over, and even then he was afraid to show them. I purchased the dies from his, and, as you all probably know, did not strike any in nickel, considering them to a certain degree as originals, but we had three struck in gold, and I believe five in silver and fifty-five in copper, the die breaking on the fifty-ninth piece, which is in existence showing the break in the die.

As we will soon see, Haseltine's memory had faded by this time [he was 70 years old] and some of the information he relayed, regarding the number of coins restruck, was not correct.

Captain John W. Haseltine's restrike

Captain John W. Haseltine, himself a civil war veteran, was a nineteenth to early twentieth century numismatist who is perhaps best known for his "Type Table" of silver coinage. He also discovered several important colonial coins and "unearthed" the Economite Hoard.

After obtaining the confession of Robert Lovett, Jr. regarding his role in the Confederate cent's history, Haseltine obtained the dies and 10 of the small coins. The first numismatic notice of these coins was carried in Haseltine's auction sale of January 13-14, 1874.

Haseltine and numismatist J. Colvin Randall, received word of the discovery of the cent almost simultaneously. These two gentlemen discussed the situation and decided that they would share in any profits to be gained from this discovery. A third person, Peter L. Krider, was commissioned by Haseltine and Randall to produce a series of restrikes in 1874. A "Circular to Collectors" date April 2, 1874 provides all the information known today regarding these restrikes.

Despite Haseltine's 1908 statement that 3 were struck in gold and five in silver, today we believe the quantities discussed in this circular are the

CIRCULAR TO COLLECTORS

Philadelphia, April 2, 1874

Having succeeded in discovering and purchasing the dies of the Confederate cent, we, the undersigned, have concluded to strike for the benefit of collectors a limited number, and in order to protect those gentlemen who had the nickel pieces originally struck in 1861, we determined to strike *none* in that metal. Our intention was to strike five hundred in copper, but after the fifty-fifth impression the collar burst and the dies were badly broken. They are now in the possession of Mr. Haseltine, and may be seen at any time at his store, No. 1343 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

The history of this piece is probably known to most collectors, but, for the information of those who are ignorant of the facts, we will state that the dies were made by Mr. Lovett, of Philadelphia, in 1861, who says that they were ordered in that year by the South, and that he struck but twelve pieces, but probably thinking that he might have some difficulty in reference to them (having made the dies for the South), he mentioned the matter to no one until a few months since, when he parted with ten pieces, struck in nickel, which he stated were all that he had, having lost two pieces. One of the said lost pieces was the means of the dies and pieces being traced. Although the Southern Confederacy did not adopt this piece, it will always be considered interesting as the only coinage designed for said confederacy.

Description.--Obverse, 1861; head of Liberty; inscription, "Confederate States of America;" reverse, a wreath of ears of corn and wheat, with a cotton bale at the bottom; in the centre, the words "1 Cent." The restrikes were struck by Peter L. Krider, No. 618 Chestnut Street, and we now offer them at the following prices:

Gold, only seven struck, each,	\$30.00
Silver, only twelve struck, each,	15.00
Copper, only fifty-five struck, each,	4.00
Nickel, originals struck in 1861, only four left, each,	20.00

All orders to be addressed to J. W. Haseltine, No. 1343 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

Respectfully, J. COLVIN RANDALL,
JOHN W. HASELTINE.

Philadelphia, April 2, 1874

We, the undersigned, do hereby certify that the following is the exact number of pieces restruck from the dies of the Confederate Cent mentioned in the forgoing circular, and that the dies are now broken,

Seven in Gold,
Twelve in Silver,
Fifty-five in Copper,

J. COLVIN RANDALL,
JOHN W. HASELTINE,
PETER L. KRIDER.

correct numbers. A popular misconception that only 4 originals were struck, has this circular as a source. Although 12 were struck, only 4 remained available at the time this circular appeared.

Washington-Confederate Cent muling

Eventually, Henry Chapman obtained the dies from Haseltine. While in his possession, Chapman combined the reverse of the Confederate cent with the obverse of a small Washington piece. This muling, which is unique, combines a Washington obverse engraved by Lovett for use by William Idler, with the reverse of the Confederate cent engraved by Lovett and later restruck by Haseltine. Idler also happened to be Haseltine's father-in-law. John J. Ford, Jr. first pointed out this ironic circumstance.

Robert Bashlow's second restrike

Eventually in 1961, the dies found their way to Robert Bashlow, of New York City, who used them for a series of restrikes for the Confederate Centenary. By this time, the dies had been damaged in several ways including chisel marks, hammer dents, rust and breaks. Concerned that they would become further damaged during this restriking process, Bashlow had the Philadelphia firm of August C. Frank Co. make transfer dies. Bashlow's restrikes were produced in a variety of compositions. He also produced various "fancy" items, according to Walter Breen, including reversed hub trials in various metals.

Ultimately, Bashlow presented the Confederate cent dies, along with the transfer dies, to the Smithsonian Institution prior to 1970.

Pedigree of the Confederate Cent Dies

- Robert Lovett, Jr. who engraved the dies in 1861
- John W. Haseltine [and J. Colvin Randall] obtained the dies early 1874. According to Walter Breen, the earliest announcement of the existence of these dies and the coins was in Haseltine's auction sale of January 13-15, 1874, lot 665.
- Henry Chapman who produced the mule with a Washington obverse and the Confederate reverse.
- Judson Brenner who displayed the dies at the 1911 ANA convention.
- Virgil Brand and the Brand Estate.
- John J. Ford, Jr. who obtained them from the Brand Estate, circa 1955-56.
- Q. David Bowers obtained the dies from Ford in 1961.
- Robert Bashlow acquired the dies in 1961 and produced the "Bashlow Restrikes."
- Bashlow presented the dies to the Smithsonian Institution prior to 1970.

Pedigree of the Washington-Confederate muling

- Henry Chapman produced this muling
- Henry Chapman inventory
- George M. Parsons
- Parsons collection sale, by Henry Chapman in June 1914, lot 1030
- Bought back by Henry Chapman for \$2.00
- Priced at \$10 in his stock
- Henry Chapman Estate
- Unknown
- Ed Rice, Prospect Plains, NJ as of 1951
- Unknown

Incomplete Auction Records of Confederate Cents

Original Issues			1987-11	B&M	\$2,420
Year	Sale	Price	1987-02	Heritage	\$1,800
1881	Steigerwalt		1987-07	Stacks	\$3,850
1900	Maris	\$16	1989-03	Mid American	\$2,000
1912	Earle	\$31	1989-01	Superior	\$3,520
1914	Parsons	\$39	1990-08	Superior	\$3,400

1921	Jenks	\$51	Silver Restrikes		
1945	Philpott	\$31.25	Year	Sale	Price
1947	Neil	\$82.50	1883	Haseltine 65th	
1981-03	Garrett	\$12,500	1901-11	L.H. Low	
1984-06	B&M	\$12,650	1901	Wilcox	\$13.50
1984-11	B&M	\$12,980	1906	Smith	\$7
1985-06	B&M	\$15,400	1912	Earle	\$25
1987-08	B&M	\$17,600	1947	Neil	\$60
1988-07	Akers	\$19,800	1981-03	Garrett	\$3,900
1989-01	B&M	\$13,530	1983-11	B&M	\$4,675

Copper Restrikes			1987-07	Stacks	\$4,950
Year	Sale	Price	1987-09	Stacks	\$7,700
1884	Warner	\$5.25	1993-05	B&M	\$7,975

1901	Wilcox	\$6.25	Gold Restrikes		
1906	Smith	\$6.50	Year	Sale	Price
1909	Zabriskie	\$9	1901	Wilcox	\$52
1912	Earle	\$14	1964-03	Kreisberg/Schulman	
1914	Gable	\$19	1973-10	Merkin	
1941	Dunham	\$36	1974-11	Groves	\$6,000
1947	Neil	\$51	1979-02	Robison	

1981-03	Garrett	\$2,400	1982	Steig	\$4,000
1984-07	Krueger	\$1,760	1988-01	Stacks	\$23,100
1984-03	Stacks	\$2,750	1989-01	Stacks	\$6,600??
1987-08	B&M	\$3,080	1989-07	Stacks	\$33,000

It is a continuing source of regret that, with few exceptions, the auction houses including Bowers and Merena have failed to supply a weight, in grains, for these specimens when offered. Listing the weight to one-tenth grain would provide a much easier record of pedigrees. Attempting to match plates for these pieces is a difficult, perhaps impossible, task.

Descriptions of the cent coinage

A. Robert Lovett, Jr., Storecard

Obverse: Bust of Liberty, wearing cap, facing left. R. LOVETT JR. ENGRAVER & DIE SINKER around. 1860 below.

Reverse: Wreath of corn and wheat. Within, 200 SO. FIFTH ST. Around, METALLIC BUSINESS CARDS. Below, PHILADELPHIA.

Edge: Plain

B. Confederate Cent

Obverse: Bust of Liberty, wearing cap, facing left. Around, CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA. 1861 below.

Reverse: Wreath of cotton, sugar cane and tobacco. Within, 1 CENT.

Edge: Plain

C. Washington-Confederate mule

Obverse: Bust of Washington facing right. GEORGE WASHINGTON around. 1792 below.

Reverse: Wreath of cotton, sugar cane and tobacco. Within, 1 CENT.

Edge: Plain

Catalog of the cent coinage

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Confederate cent in copper-nickel | h. Aluminum |
| 2. Haseltine restrike in copper | i. Tin |
| 3. Haseltine restrike in silver | j. Zinc |
| 4. Haseltine restrike in gold | k. Red fiber |
| 5. Washington-Confederate mule | l. Other metals? |
| 6. Bashlow restrikes: | m. Uniface obverse in silver |
| a. Bronze or copper | n. Uniface reverse in silver |
| b. Silver | o. Uniface obverse in gold |
| c. Gold | p. Uniface reverse in gold |
| d. Platinum | q. Obverse hub impression |
| e. "Nickel-silver" | (reversed) |
| f. "Goldline" | r. Reverse hub impression. |
| g. Lead | |

The Confederate Half Dollar



The Original Half Dollar

[The photo above is of the Scott Restrike in the absence of a photo of the original.]

Like the Confederate cent, the half dollar of the confederacy was not known among general numismatic circles until long after it was struck. As with the one cent issue, the half dollar was struck in very limited quantities. Further, both the cent and the half dollar were later restruck for collectors.

The New Orleans Mint was surrendered to the State of Louisiana after that state seceded from the Union and eventually, control was passed on to the Confederate States of America in February 1861. Four half dollars were struck soon after, combining the familiar Liberty Seated obverse with a new reverse die. During this time, coinage from Federal dies was also continued through April 30, 1861. The Confederate half dollars did not come to the attention of numismatists until 1879 when E. B. Mason, Jr., of Philadelphia, obtained an example of the half dollar along with the reverse die from Dr. B. F. Taylor, Chief Coiner of the Confederate Mint. He sold both to John Walter Scott of J. W. Scott & Co., a New York City numismatic firm for \$310.

The description of this half dollar by Dr. Taylor, as related in the *Philadelphia Record* of March 11, 1879, provides a fascinating view of the Liberty Seated obverse, described as the reverse of the Confederate coin. "The obverse represents a Liberty cap above the American shield, the Union of the latter containing seven stars, representing the seven seceding States, the whole being surrounded with a wreath of sugar cane and cotton in bloom, and the legend, 'Confederate States of America' above, and 'Half Dol.' below. The reverse has the goddess of Liberty, with the thirteen stars, representing the States from which the Confederacy sprang, and the date, '1861' in exergue. "

"Discovery" Letter From Dr. B. F. Taylor

Over the years, many authors have attempted to paraphrase the history of the Confederate half dollar, which has left room for mistaken information. The history of this issue is probably best explained through an exchange of letters from Marcus J. Wright, curator of the Confederate Archives, and Dr. B. F. Taylor, chief coiner of the Confederate States Mint. These letters are reproduced in their entirety.

War Department,
Adjutant-General's Office,
Washington, March 27, 1879.

Dr. B. F. Taylor, New Orleans, La.:

Dear Sir: The enclosed circulars will explain to you the nature of the duties upon which I am now engaged.

I beg to refer you to my friends, Generals Beauregard and Hood, and Captain Pierce, of your city, for my service in the Confederate army. I would like to have from you for file with the Confederate archives, a letter stating when and where you were appointed chief coiner of the Confederate States Mint, instructions received, copies of originals of any official papers, sketches, descriptions, etc., of all the coins made, etc. This will make a valuable addition to Confederate history, and I know no one but you can give it.

Very truly yours,
Marcus J. Wright

New Orleans, La., April 7, 1879

To Hon. Marcus J. Wright:

Your favor requesting a statement of the history of the New Orleans Mint, in reference to the coinage under the Confederate government, is received.

That institution was turned over by the State of Louisiana the last of February, 1861, to the Confederate States of America, the old officers being retained and confirmed by the government, viz.: William A. Elmore, Superintendent; A. J. Guirot, Treasurer; M. F. Bonzano, M.D., Melter and Refiner, and Howard Millsbaugh, Assayer.

In the month of April orders were issued by Mr. Memminger, Secretary of the Treasury, to the effect that designs for half dollar coins should be submitted to him for approval.

Among several sent, the one approved bore on the obverse of the coin a representation of the Goddess of Liberty, surrounded by thirteen stars, denoting the thirteen States from whence the Confederacy sprung, and on the lower rim the figures 1861.

On the reverse there is a shield with seven stars, representing the seceding States; above the shield is a liberty-cap, and entwined around it stalks of sugar cane and cotton. The inscription is "CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA." The dies were engraved by A. H. M. Patterson, engraver and die sinker, who is now living in Commercial Place. They were prepared for the coining press by Conrad Schmidt, foreman of the coining room (who is still living), from which four pieces only were struck.

About this period an order came from the Secretary suspending operations on account of the difficulty of obtaining bullion, and the Mint was closed April 30th, 1861.

Of the four pieces mentioned one was sent to the government, one presented to Professor Biddle, of the University of Louisiana, one sent to Dr.

E. Ames, of New Orleans, the remaining one being retained by myself. Upon diligent inquiry I am unable to find but one piece besides my own, that being in the possession of a Confederate officer of this city, who transmits it to his son as a souvenir of his father's services in the Confederate cause.

So soon as copies are made I will take pleasure in sending you a specimen for the archives you represent.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

B. F. TAYLOR, M. D.

Formerly Chief Coiner, C. S. A.

Biddle or Riddell?

One mystery that remains is the identification of "Professor Biddle." I believe this to actually be Professor J. L. [John Leonard] Riddell who was Melter and Refiner at the New Orleans Mint beginning in 1838, through 1849, and who wrote "A Monograph of the Silver Dollar, Good and Bad" in 1845. He was a professor at the Medical College of the University of Louisiana, which later became Tulane University. Among several discoveries, he invented the binocular microscope in 1851. Professor Riddell remained at the University of Louisiana until his death in October 1865. As Dr. Taylor stated that he was only able to find two of the four originals in New Orleans, in 1879, there is a good possibility that this coin had since been sold, lost, or handed down to relatives.

Additional evidence is presented in an article by Patterson DuBois which appeared in the American Journal of Numismatics, July 1882, pp. 14-15. In this article, DuBois specifically mentions that one of the Original half dollars was presented to "Dr. Riddell." According to Pete Smith, Patterson DuBois was an employee of the Philadelphia mint from 1867 through 1886, was the great grandson of early Mint Director Robert Patterson and was the son of Susanna Eckfeldt, a descendent [grand-daughter?] of Adam Eckfeldt. He was an informal mint historian and an author and lecturer on child culture and religious education. With this background, his testimony is highly regarded.

Pedigree of the Four Originals

The four original confederate half dollars obviously started their history in 1861 at the Confederate Mint in New Orleans. Further records of each are rather sketchy. Through the efforts of Walter Breen, we know a great deal more of the pedigrees than any past generation. I have no doubt, however, that there is still more to learn. Most of the following is taken from Breen's Encyclopedia of U. S. and Colonial Coins, 1722-1789, Revised and Corrected Edition, Wolfeboro, 1989.

1. Taylor specimen

- Chief Coiner B. F. Taylor (with the die),
- E. Mason, Jr. 1879,
- J. W. Scott for \$310,
- Offered repeatedly at auction but always protected and retained by Scott,
- Sold to J. Sanford Saltus for \$3,000,
- Saltus presented it to the ANS museum, where it remains.

Choice toned proof with perfect edge reeding. No rust on the reverse die, no flattening on the leaves or other details. An odd bulge with incuse marks appears within the white stripes of the Shield. 192.25 grains.

2. Riddell specimen

- Professor Riddell of the University of Louisiana,
- Riddell's descendants [with other coins of the period],
- Non-collector to a New Orleans coin dealer with a large assortment of (mostly common) coins of the Civil War period and earlier, tarnished black but undamaged. The dealer paid little attention to it and swears he did not even turn the piece over, not thinking of Confederate coins at the time; but when he got around to classifying the coins after buying the collection, dipping the blackened silver pieces in order to see date and mintmarks, he found not only that he had a Confederate half dollar but that it showed good edge reeding and no obverse flattening,
- Lester Merkin.

Better than Extremely Fine, obviously a former proof, and on comparison with the ANS coin shows all the peculiarities of the former. Approximately 190 grains.

3. Ames specimen

- Dr. E. Ames of New Orleans
- to his son and mentioned (without name) in Dr. B. F. Taylor's letter: "in the possession of a Confederate Officer of this city, who transmits it to his son as a souvenir of his father's services in the Confederate cause,"
- Its intervening owners are not known,
- Re-discovered in Roundout, New York in 1910, apparently by Thomas Elder,
- H. O. Granberg,
- William H. Woodin,
- Waldo Newcomer,
- Col. E. H. R. Green
- Burdette G. Johnson,
- Eric P. Newman about 1940.

Newman still has this coin which Breen examined at the Central States convention in St. Louis, 1957. It is also Extremely Fine and a former proof with identical traits to first two. 190.5 grains.

It is barely possible that "Ames" and "Riddell" would be transposed in the last two coins.

4. Jefferson Davis Specimen

- Confederate Treasury Secretary C. G. Memminger,
- Jefferson Davis,
- Union soldiers, who rifled Mrs. Davis's trunk, stealing this coin and other valuables, according to a communication from Jefferson Davis to J. W. Scott, dated May 10, 1879. According to Breen's account, this coin was Davis's pocket piece, and was on his person when Union soldiers captured him (in woman's garments) and imprisoned him in Fortress Monroe,
- Unknown,
- Theodore L. Schnur,
- Paul Franklin,
- John J. Ford, Jr.

Worn but the edge and obverse are normal, not flattened as with the restrikes. 189 grains.

In Don Taxay's *Counterfeit, Mis-struck and Unofficial U. S. Coins* the story is told that "one night in May 1961, when Ford was attending an eastern convention, a dealer suddenly walked onto the floor and offered him a Scott restrike. It was 10:30 p.m. and Ford, who had been at his bourse table for some thirteen hours, scanned the piece with blood-shot eyes. It was only Fine plus and the owner wanted a rather high price, but after lengthy negotiations (known colloquially as "horse-trading") the coin was purchased. Paul Franklin, who had witnessed the transaction, then offered Ford a profit and, for the second time in five minutes, the piece exchanged hands. A few weeks later Ford prevailed upon Franklin to sell the coin back to him at a very substantial increase. The 'restrike' had turned out to be not only an *original Confederate half dollar*, but is believed to be the identical specimen taken from Jefferson Davis at Fortress Monroe!"

To this incredible story Breen replied: "This story now appears to have been oversimplified as in King Lear: 'mar a curious tale in the telling' indeed, as the dealer is Theodore L. Schnur, who long ran a coin shop on West 44th Street in New York City, and Ford presumably would have known enough at the time to see, even through smoke and stupor, that the piece has an unusually bold obverse and no flattening of edge reeding. The coin later became the subject of acrimonious litigation, Schnur suing for an extremely high figure to recover the coin plus costs and damages. The case was later reportedly settled out of court."

This may be the piece which William A. Philpott, Jr. [*The Numismatist*, January 1951] discussed, the property of Mark Bream of Cashtown, Pennsylvania. Bream claimed to have the Jefferson Davis piece, inherited from his father, who had purchased the coin from a Union soldier. "In 1936, at a meeting of the Washington Numismatic Society (in Gettysburg, Pa.), Mr. Bream appeared with his coin and read a paper on it. It is understood that some members of the Washington Society examined the coin carefully, weighed it and found it up to standard. The author has this information by second-hand only. Mr. Bream says the coin is not for sale - and the best information on its whereabouts is that "he has given it to his sister, who lives in Ohio." It is unknown if the coin Bream owned was an original or a restrike.

Pedigree of the Die

The reverse die for the Confederate half dollar was engraved by A. H. M. Patterson, an engraver and die-sinker, of New Orleans. After striking the four originals, the die and one of these originals was retained by Chief Coiner Taylor. Eventually, in 1879, E. B. Mason, Jr. [Walter Breen gives the name Ebenezer Locke Mason] of Philadelphia obtained the die, selling it to John Walter Scott. After the Scott Tokens and Scott Restrikes were produced, Scott had the die defaced by filing a deep groove across its surface. Later, this die appeared for sale in Scott's sale #122, June 26-27, 1893, at which it is reported that Samuel Hudson Chapman purchased this item for \$31. This fact was reported in the April 1894 number of *The Numismatist*.

Some time later, this canceled die reportedly appeared for sale in a Lyman H. Low auction, being purchased by Henry Chapman. Which sale has yet to be determined, although it would have been prior to the March 1910 issue of *The Numismatist*. In this same issue, Judson Brenner was reported as the purchaser from Henry Chapman.

In a 1923 letter to M. L. Beistle, which is reproduced below, David Proskey stated that this die was acquired by J. Sanford Saltus who gave it to the Louisiana Historical Society. This Society has no record of the die and its whereabouts are not known today.

The Scott Token



Most collectors today have heard of the Scott Token and the Scott Restrike. Many have probably seen one or both. If you asked 100 numismatists which came first, probably only 65 would have the right answer, 30 of these because they know the answer and half of the others by chance.

After acquiring the Confederate die, J. W. Scott, and his associate David Proskey, developed an elaborate plan to profit from their fortunate purchase. They located 500 half dollars dated 1861 from the New Orleans Mint and planned to restrike these already struck coins with the Confederate die.

An advertising circular, dated October 17, 1879 and reprinted below, explains that the die broke on the first trial and 500 tokens were produced before restriking the issue. Effectively, the tokens came first.

The Scott Restrike



Initially, Scott and Proskey restruck the Confederate half using full weight 1861-O half dollars of the Liberty Seated design as "blanks." It was quickly discovered that the reverse design from the original coin interfered with the Confederate design.

The next step was to remove the reverse, providing a smooth surface. In a 1923 letter to Beistle, Proskey stated that the reverse was "drilled off." This had the effect of reducing the weight by approximately 7 grains to 185 grains.

Advertising Circular Issued by Scott & Co.

"146 Fulton Street, New York City, October 17, 1879.

"Dear Sir -- It is with great pleasure we present you with the restruck half dollar subscribed for on the -- ult., and hope it will meet with your approbation. We regret the delay in forwarding, which was caused by the die breaking on the first trial. It then had to be set in a heavy steel band to prevent further damage. Before risking the die again on the hard silver we thought it advisable to strike the requisite number (500) in white metal, with the following inscription for a reverse: 4 ORIGINALS STRUCK BY ORDER OF C. S. A. IN NEW ORLEANS, 1861. * * * * * REV. SAME AS U. S. (FROM ORIGINAL DIE. SCOTT.) These will be sold in any quantity to those who subscribed to the silver Confederate piece, at 50 cents each. It was with difficulty that we procured the 500 half dollars of a special mintage on which the pieces have been struck by a new method over genuine 1861 N. O. mint U. S. half dollars, and in consequence they must rank high above ordinary restruck coins.

"The die (damaged only sufficiently to prevent restriking) is a very valuable and interesting relic, and is now for sale. Price, \$50.

"Up to the 10th inst. we received orders for 567 pieces. The odd 67 subscribers have been supplied from a like number of patrons who ordered two copies. This we concluded would be the more equitable plan for all parties concerned. Amateurs who ordered two will please remember that by this plan they certainly get one, whereas if they had drawn for chances they might have been left without any. We have received quite a number of orders since the 10th inst., all of which we are unable to fill, unless some of our subscribers who get two will kindly return one, for which we will be pleased to pay \$2.50.

"Respectfully

"Scott & Company"

Proskey's letter to Beistle relating the history of the Scott restrike:

New York Coin and Stamp Company, Inc
912 Sixth Avenue
New York, Sept. 25, 1923

Mr. M. L. Beistle,
Shippensburg, Pa.

My dear Mr. Beistle:

Your favor received requesting a statement of the history of the Confederate State's Restrike Half Dollar. J. W. Scott bought the die of the reverse of the Confederate half dollar, together with the Proof specimen of the only known Confederate half dollar, at that time, from E. B. Mason, Jr., of Philadelphia, (a worn specimen having since been found). The U. S. Government had seized the obverse as its property, and could have seized both sides, as at the close of the war in 1865 the U. S. government became the heir of the Confederacy.

Scott decided to strike impressions from his die, and he sent out circulars offering silver restrikes at \$2 each, agreeing to have only 500 pieces struck. Preparing for this issue, Scott purchased 500 United States half dollars of New Orleans mintage and had the reverses drilled off. Then for fear that the die would break, a steel collar was affixed, and 500 impressions in white metal were struck in order to be able to supply something should the die go to pieces, but the die held intact even after the silver pieces were struck, each of the latter obverses (Liberty seated) was placed on a blank of soft brass and then struck on a screw press. This helped to keep the obverse from flattening. The writer supervised the process so that the workers kept no specimens for souvenirs. The die was then softened and cut across, so no more could be struck from the perfect die. The die now reposes in the collection of the Louisiana Historical Society, the gift of Mr. J. Sanford Saltus. A couple of brass impressions exist showing the ridge across. These are now in the collection of Mr. Elliott Smith, New York City.

When all were struck Scott sent out circulars with the coins to the subscribers offering to pay 50c each over the subscription price for the return of any of the pieces, stating as a reason "oversubscription," which was untrue. It was doubtful if over 250 were sold, as Scott had a plentiful supply of them for over 30 years thereafter. He gradually raised the price to \$15 each. The original Proof half dollar was several times placed in various auction sales, but always "bought in." Finally the writer sold it to Mr. J. Sanford Saltus for \$3,000, who presented it to the American Numismatic Society.

Several years later, William A. Philpott, Jr. wrote an article, appearing in *The Numismatist* for April 1950, which traced the history of the restrike. In this article he mentioned the existence of a restrike with a double struck obverse, rotated 180° between striking. "The date 1861 shows plainly at the top and bottom. The figure of Liberty, with all her details of dress, are perfectly superimposed. Even the stars "pile up" in proper position. In other words, the obverse shows a perfectly mis-struck or double-struck coin, as if it had been carefully fed "upside down" a second time into the coining press during the minting operation." The confederate reverse is struck but once. To the best of today's knowledge, this is the only such example to be identified. One might wonder what would have transpired had Proskey or Scott noticed the double struck obverse and struck the reverse twice as well!

Walter Breen had observed that "there are at least two, possibly three, copy dies of the CSA half dollar reverse, muled with medalllic obverses; one of them is the only known copy die made by the notorious and much overrated spark-erosion process (a poor thing, indeed, with its ragged edge to letters), the other has very modern lettering unlike the original."

The Scott restrike is one of those numismatic curiosities that you either love or hate. Philpott, in his *The Numismatist* article states "the story of this fabulous coin (and it is fabulous) has been pretty well pieced together, facts authenticated, dates and names documented." The opposing view is succinctly noted by John W. Adams, in volume 1 of *United States Numismatic Literature* [pp. 58-59]: "Ever the commercial genius, Scott scoured the countryside for 1861 half dollars of regular issue, polished off the reverse designs endowed by the mint and then mated these newly virgin surfaces with his Confederate acquisition. Initially a slow seller despite considerable promotion, these fabrications now sell for serious money - a fact which, as much as it may demonstrate the foresight of the manufacturer, says little for modern tastes."

Catalogue of the Confederate Half Dollar

1. Original Proof. 4 pieces struck in 1861.
2. Scott token.
3. Prototype restrike. Full weight.
4. Regular restrike. Approximately 185 grains.
5. Restrike with cracked obverse. Only one has been identified.
6. Brass splasher from the canceled Confederate die. Apparently two were produced with neither located today.

To be identified as one of the four originals, the coin in question must be of full, or nearly full, weight, must have complete and strong edge reeding, and cannot show any trace of the Federal reverse design. Should the Confederate die turn up, it must conform in every respect to the Original or an example of the restrike. The genuine die will have a chisel mark defacing the image.

Bibliography

- Adams, John W. United States Numismatic Literature. Volume One. Mission Viejo, CA: George Frederick Kolbe Publications, 1982.
- Adams, John W. United States Numismatic Literature. Volume Two. Crestline, CA: George Frederick Kolbe Publications, 1990.
- American Journal of Numismatics*. April 1879.
- American Journal of Numismatics*. July 1882.
- Beistle, M. L. A Register of Half Dollar Die Varieties and Sub-Varieties. Shippensburg, Pennsylvania: the author, 1929.
- Bowers, Q. David. The History of United States Coinage as Illustrated by the Garrett Collection. Hollywood, CA: Bowers and Ruddy Galleries, Inc., 1979.
- Breen, Walter H. Walter Breen's Complete Encyclopedia of U. S. and Colonial Coins. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1988.
- Breen, Walter. Encyclopedia of U. S. and Colonial Proof Coins 1722-1989. Revised and Corrected Edition. Wolfeboro, NH: Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., 1989.
- Ford, John J., Jr. "Numismatic Americana: The Confederate Cent." *The Coin Collector's Journal*. New York: January-February, 1951.
- Haseltine, John W. Address presented to the ANA Convention. Philadelphia, 1908.
- Haseltine, John W. and Randall, J. Colvin. Circular to Collectors. Philadelphia, 1874.
- Hoober, Richard T. "Enigma of the Confederate Cent." *The Numismatist*. American Numismatic Association: September, 1956.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: April 1894.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: April 1950.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: January 1951.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: March 1905.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: March 1910.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: March 1919.
- Numismatist, The*. American Numismatic Association: September 1918.
- Smith, Pete. American Numismatic Biographies. Rocky River, Ohio: Gold Leaf Press, 1992.
- Taxay, Don. Counterfeit, Mis-Stuck, and Unofficial U. S. Coins. New York: Arco Publishing Co., Inc., 1963.

